

**Washington, DC** – Today, the House of Representatives passed two bills that would greatly improve the lives of San Antonio's veterans. The [Veterans Health Care Budget Reform and Transparency Act of 2009 \(HR 1016\)](#) will allow appropriations for the Department of Veterans Affairs to be made over a two year budget period, providing certainty and continuity and flexibility in veterans' medical care. The [Service Members Home Ownership Tax Act of 2009 \(HR 3590\)](#) protects several tax credits for service members who are buying and selling their homes. **Congressman Charlie Gonzalez (TX-20)** issued the following statement on the bills' passage.

"Meeting our responsibilities to our veterans and military members is a top priority for me and for my colleagues. Budgeting rarely sounds exciting, but HR 1016 will ensure that VA hospitals can provide the best care for our veterans and meet the needs of every soldier, sailor, airman, and marine who returns from combat in need of care. I was proud to provide tax credits to active duty military in the stimulus bill, and the improvements offered by HR 3590 would make certain that those men and women get the full benefits to which they're entitled."

Last year was the first time in 12 years that the Military Construction and Veterans Affairs Appropriations Act was signed into law before the end of the fiscal year. While the House passed its version on time this year, the Senate was unable to do so before the end of the 2009 Fiscal Year. HR 1016 will create a two-year budget authority for certain medical accounts within the funding for the Department of Veterans Affairs, providing a buffer so that failure to pass the annual appropriations will not inhibit the Department's ability to invest in necessary medical care for veterans. The [American Legion](#), [Veterans of Foreign Wars](#), [AMVETS](#), and [Disabled American Veterans](#) have all called for passage of HR 1016. The House passed its version, which Congressman Gonzalez co-sponsored, 409-1 on June 23, and the Senate agreed to a version on August 06. With today's 419-1 vote, the bill goes next to the President to be signed into law.

The [American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 \(HR 1\)](#), commonly known as the Stimulus, added a number of provisions to give tax credits for homebuyers. HR 3590 would make payments under the Defense Housing Assistance Program (HAP) tax-exempt, to help active duty service members who need to sell their homes in this depressed market. It also allows service members who were forced to sell their new homes because of an overseas deployment to keep the first-time home buyer credit and extends the deadline for applying for that credit so that it would be available for those currently deployed overseas. The House passed HR 3590 unanimously by a vote of 416-0.

###